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# Field Borders

## Minnesota Job Sheet

USDA Soil Conservation Service  
St. Paul, Minnesota

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### What is a field border?

A field border is a band or strip of perennial vegetation established next to cropland on the outside of a field.

When used with contouring, contour stripcropping, cross-slope farming patterns, or terraces, it eliminates planting row crops up and down hill and provides a turning area for farm equipment.

### How it helps the land

Field borders control sheet, rill and gully erosion at the edges of a field where end rows would run up and down hill. Field borders also provide wildlife food and cover and improve the landscape.

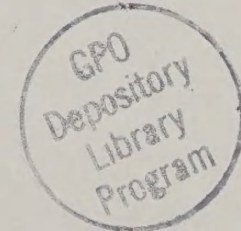
### Where the practice applies

Field borders should be used on any cropland field where sheet, rill and gully erosion exceed tolerable limits on end row areas. Field borders can compliment a ridge-till system by eliminating end rows and providing access to the field.

### Where to get help

For assistance in planning and establishing field borders on your farm, contact your Soil Conservation Service (SCS) office. Also check with the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) to see if the field border areas are eligible for set-aside acreage.

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## Requirements of field borders

Field borders are required as shown on your conservation plan map. The recommended seeding and fertilizer rates for your field borders are as follows:

### Recommended seeding for your field borders

species	lbs/ac
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### Recommended fertilizer (lbs/ac)

N	P	K	lime
_____	_____	_____	_____

## Applying the practice

This practice will be considered to be applied when the permanent vegetation recommended above is established in strips wide enough to turn farm equipment. Field borders must be a minimum of 16 feet wide and must be wide enough to allow you to turn your farm equipment. When establishing field borders follow these seeding guidelines:

- Prepare a firm seedbed.
- Apply lime and fertilizer before seeding.
- Drill grass and legume seed uniformly over this strip 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep, or broadcast uniformly over the field border.
- Oats may be seeded as a nurse crop at the rate of 1 to 1 1/2 bushels per acre during the spring. Mow oats before they head out or harvest for grain if allowed.
- Seeding may be completed during the spring seeding period, April 1 to May 15, or during the late summer seeding period, August 1 to September 10. The seeding period for warm season grasses is May 1 to June 15. Refer to your plan schedule for your planned planting date.

## Maintaining the practice

- Protect from livestock to maximize wildlife benefits.
- Mow to control weeds or shrub development. Delay mowing until after July 15 to avoid harming nesting birds.
- It will be necessary to maintain nutrient levels. Consider top-dressing with fertilizer. If vegetative cover declines, apply 30 pounds of nitrogen (N), 20 pounds of phosphate ( $P_2O_5$ ) and 20 pounds of potash ( $K_2O$ ) per acre.
- Reseed as necessary to maintain desired plant species.
- On adjacent sloping cropland, till soil on the contour, at right angles to the field border. This prevents water from forming gullies along the field borders.
- Shut off farm chemical sprayer when turning on a field border. Insist custom chemical applicators do the same.

